EMENTS - CITY OF CHICAGO

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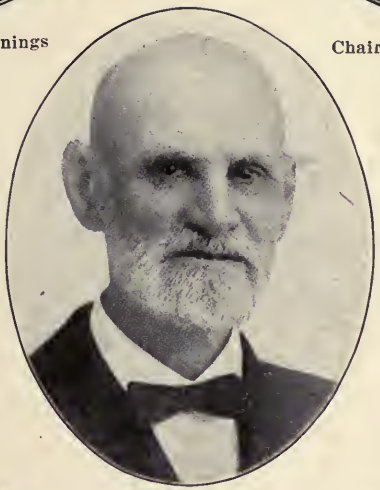
William Hale Thompson
Mayor

M. J. Faherty

President of the Board of
Local Improvements

IRENE MANTONYA
Chairman Street Openings and Widenings

OSCAR WOLFF
Chairman Street and Alley Paving



DAVID W. CLARK
Vice-President

LEONARD WITHALL
Assistant Secretary and Chairman Sewers and Drains

EDWARD J. GLACKIN
Secretary and Superintendent of Special Assessments

Chicago, July 30, 1921

To the Hon. Wm. Hale Thompson, Mayor of the City of Chicago, and Members of the City Council.

Gentlemen:

I herewith transmit an illustrated report of the most important activities of the Board of Local Improvements during the past six years; also a brief outline of the methods of procedure in local improvements.

It is desirable that all property owners should know some of the necessary and important proceedings under the law, in order to start and carry to completion a local improvement. The Board does not desire to proceed with a local improvement until the same has been requested.

A local improvement may be started by the Board on a petition or request by the property owners, or upon an order from the City Council, or upon a motion by a member of the Board. When such a request, petition or council order is received, it is referred to an appropriate committee for investigation, and if there is sufficient reason for it, the petition is approved and the Board orders an estimate to be made. The estimate is made by the engineer, and submitted to the Board for approval. This estimate is based upon the prevailing market prices of material and labor at the time the estimate is made. When the estimate is received by the Board, it is approved, a date is set for public hearing, notices of which are sent to the owners of all property abutting upon the proposed improvement. These notices contain a general description of the improvement and the engineer's estimate of the cost of the same. At the public hearing, the property owners and the Board discuss the character and nature of the improvement, its extent and the cost of the same. The opinion of the property owners at the public hearing is advisory and the Board makes the decision. Thereupon the Board decides either to proceed with the improvement as proposed, to modify, or to abandon it. However, if a majority of the property owners file a petition against the improvement within thirty days all proceedings are stayed for one year.

If the Board decides to proceed with the improvement, an ordinance describing the improvement in detail is sent to the City Council. This ordinance may be approved or disapproved by the Council, but may not be modified by it. If approved, the attorney of the Board files a petition in court asking for authority to levy the assessment. Thereupon the assessment is spread, apportioning to each piece of property its proportionate share of the cost of the improvement, based upon the benefits each piece of property will derive from the making of the improvement, but no property can be assessed more than it will be benefited. In the case of some improvements, where the city in general is benefited, a proportionate share of the cost is assessed against the City of Chicago as a public benefit.

The assessment roll is filed in court. Notices are sent to all owners of property assessed, the notices stating the total estimated cost of the work, the amount of public benefits, if any, the amount assessed against the particular piece of property, and the time for filing objections by the property owners.

In some instances objections are filed by property owners who are honest in their belief that the ordinance providing for the improvement is unreasonable, or that their assessment is excessive; but the greater part of all objections filed is due to direct solicitation of property owners by

organizations. These proposals usually offer to conduct litigation for a compensation based upon a large percentage of the amount of the reduction of the assessment secured for the property owner. This business is so profitable to these organizations and has grown to such an extent that they keep a corps of trained experts regularly employed to carry on their work.

If the assessment is equitably spread in the first place and if certain property owners by filing objections succeed in having their own assessment reduced, this causes a portion of the cost of the work that should be borne by these property owners to be borne by their neighbors. It is seldom that additional burden is placed on the City of Chicago because of these reductions. The injustice of this discrimination in reducing assessments on some particular property is accentuated by the fact that the property owners, whose actual assessments are increased, are not represented in court during the proceedings. We feel that few property owners are willing to be a party to such injustice to their neighbors for the sake of reducing their own assessment.

If the property owners who believe that they are inequitably assessed will come into the office of the Board of Local Improvements they will be shown the assessment plat and the amounts charged to each piece of property. If the property owner can suggest a more equitable assessment it will receive consideration. Any error or injustice in the spreading of the assessment that is pointed out will be corrected without any expense to the property owner.

After the assessment has been confirmed, the Board proceeds to advertise for bids for doing the work. Bids are publicly opened and tabulated and the contract awarded to the lowest responsible bidder.

The work of construction is done by the contractor under the supervision of the Board, its engineers and inspectors. It is also subject to the supervision of the property owners, many of whom live along the line of work. Complaints from property owners receive prompt attention from the Board, and if well founded, the matter is remedied.

Upon the completion of the work, final vouchers for the remainder due the contractor are issued to him. The Board files a final certificate with the court, showing the exact cost of the improvement and that the work has been completed in substantial compliance with the provisions of the ordinance. At any time within thirty days after this certificate is filed, any property owner assessed has the right to file objections if he can show that the work has not been constructed substantially in compliance with the ordinance.

The Board is making every effort to promote fair and honest competition among the contractors and tries to get the work done at the lowest possible cost.

In condemnation proceedings, upon the filing of the petition the court enters an order designating two competent persons as commissioners to act with the Superintendent of Special Assessments, who shall investigate and report to the court the just compensation to be made to the respective owners of private property, which will be taken or damaged for said improvements and also what real estate will be benefited by such improvements and the amount of such benefits to each parcel of land, neither shall be employees of the petitioning municipality and both shall be disinterested persons; such commissioners shall thereupon make such investigation and prepare and file in court their report. When the report is filed by the commissioners, the City, as the agency of the public for conducting the pro-

ceedings and making the improvements, is in a position of trust toward the owners of property taken, to see that they are offered just compensation without the necessity of recourse to litigation, and, on the other hand, is under an obligation to the taxpayers and assessed persons who pay this assessment to see that the compensation in no case is excessive or beyond the bounds of justice. It is therefore incumbent upon the City in each of these cases to organize a staff of attorneys and skilled witnesses to contest the claims of such owners as are not satisfied with the compensation offered by the City, as well as to contest the claims of the owners of property specially assessed, so far as they seek a reduction of their assessments.

The City is opposed in court in these proceedings by several hundred groups of attorneys and experts of the greatest skill. The City is therefore obliged, in forming its organization, to secure the services of the ablest men it can procure. This necessarily entails great expense, which has been the subject of much criticism by those who have not analyzed the situation which makes such organizations necessary. The outlays hitherto incurred by this work have so far been abundantly justified by the results procured. In one branch of the Michigan Avenue case, relating to the condemnation of a part of the Kirk Soap factory, the claim of the Kirk Company was for $1,538,148.00. After thirteen weeks of trial before a jury in the County Court, the verdict was $488,596.00. This was subsequently affirmed by the Supreme Court. Thus the City in this one case saved $1,049,552.00 by the skill of its organization of experts.

In the same Michigan Avenue improvement a large tract of factory and warehouse property owned by the Chicago Dock & Canal Company was assessed $177,059.28 for benefits from the Michigan Avenue improvement. The assessment was strenuously contested by the Dock Company, which claimed that there would be no benefits whatever to their property from the improvement and that the assessment should be entirely canceled. The Court, after an able presentation of its case by the City's counsel and expert witnesses, sustained the entire assessment, and this likewise was affirmed by the Supreme Court, saving to the City in this case the full amount of the assessment of $177,000.00 as the result of the skill of its experts.

In spite of attacks, which have been made on the fees of these experts as excessive, I am convinced that they have saved the City many times the cost of their services, and that no others equally good can be secured for a less amount of money. As long as the City continues to be opposed in these cases by experts of outstanding ability, it considers that duty requires it to maintain an organization which can win its cases.

The name of every person employed by the Board of Local Improvements as an expert in bond issue improvements and the rate of compensation to be paid such persons have, in every case, been approved by the Finance Committee and by the City Council, and no rates have been established or witnesses employed in these cases, without the authorization of the Finance Committee and the Council having first been obtained.

The following is a summary of the work done by this Department from 1915 to 1920 inclusive:

1,047 miles of Sidewalk constructed at a total cost of.....	$ 5,206,348.36
692,167 lineal feet of Water Service Pipe installed, at a total cost of	613,890.16
538,441 lineal feet of Water Supply Pipe installed, at a total cost of	943,405.40
329 miles of Sewers constructed, 42,677 Drains built, 36,296	

Catch Basins constructed, 11,872 Manholes constructed, at a total cost of 7,288,115.48

666 miles of Street and Alley Pavements laid, at a total cost of 32,147,900.55

CONDEMNATION PROCEEDINGS—STREET WIDENINGS AND OPENINGS

12th Street, from Michigan Avenue to Ashland Avenue; Michigan Avenue, from East Randolph Street to East Chicago Avenue; West Polk Street, from South State Street to South Clark Street; 71st Street, from Stony Island Avenue to South Shore Avenue; Western Avenue, from 69th Street to 107th Street, and other streets and alleys, at a total cost of $18,936,400.89

CONDEMNATION ROLL FILED IN COURT ON THE FOLLOWING STREETS:

South Ashland Avenue, from 69th Street to Beverly Avenue; Ogden Avenue, from West Randolph Street to North Clark and Center Streets; North Western Avenue, from Lawrence Avenue to Howard Street; West Randolph Street, from North Sangamon Street to Ogden Avenue, at a total cost of ..... $ 5,715,472.00

Total $70,851,532.84

PROJECTED WORK

Ordinances passed for Sidewalks, work not done, 188 miles	$ 1,786,752.00
Work ordered for Sidewalks, ordinances passed, 576 miles	5,474,304.00
Water Mains under contract	235,000.00
Water Service Pipe under contract	160,000.00
Aberdeen Street System of Sewers	4,700,000.00
Augusta Street System of Sewers	1,133,805.00
Crawford Avenue System of Sewers	1,012,662.00
Broadway System of Sewers	2,000,000.00
Under contract, 17 miles of Sewers	337,900.00
Confirmed	149,500.00
In Court (not including Broadway System)	406,000.00
Estimates made	569,200.00
Other Sewers projected	500,000.00
Street Paving	31,000,000.00
Alley Paving	4,000,000.00
Total	$53,465,123.00

CHICAGO PLAN COMMISSION CONDEMNATION PROJECTED WORK

South Water Street, from Michigan Avenue to the Lake

Western Avenue, from Lawrence Avenue to West 31st Street

South Ashland Avenue, from 47th Street to 69th Street

South Ashland Avenue, from West 31st Street to West 47th Street

South Ashland Avenue, from the south branch of the Chicago River to West 31st Street

North Ashland Avenue, from Devon Avenue to Ridge Avenue

North Ashland Avenue, from Ridge Avenue to Winnemac Avenue

North Ashland Avenue, from Winnemac Avenue to Irving Park Boulevard
North Ashland Avenue, from Irving Park Boulevard to West Lake Street
Beverly Avenue, from West 87th Street to West 95th Street
South Robey Street, from Harrison Street to Roosevelt Road
South Robey Street, from Roosevelt Road to West 23rd Street
South Robey Street, from West 47th Street to West 51st Street
South Robey Street, from West Garfield Boulevard to West 87th Street
Fullerton Avenue, from Laramie Avenue to Oak Park Avenue
71st Street, from Cottage Grove Avenue to Stony Island Avenue
Ridge Avenue, from Clark Street to Peterson Avenue
Peterson Avenue, from Clark Street to Caldwell Avenue
West Polk Street, from Halsted Street to Canal Street
Taylor Street, from Halsted Street to Canal Street
Jefferson Street, from Harrison Street to Roosevelt Road
Clinton Street, from Harrison Street to Roosevelt Road
Desplaines Street, from Harrison Street to Roosevelt Road
Indiana Avenue, from 16th Street to Cottage Grove Avenue
22nd Street, from South Park Avenue to State Street
Pershing Road, from Halsted Street to Robey Street

The Board has always tried to co-operate with the Mayor, the Members of the City Council, the Chicago Plan Commission and the People of the City of Chicago.

Very truly yours,
M. J. FAHERTY,
President of the Board of Local Improvements.

M. J. Faherty, President of the Board of Local Improvements, and Charles Wacker, Chairman of the Chicago Plan Commission, breaking ground for the improvement of Pershing Road, from Halsted to Robey Street, 1½ miles to be opened and widened to a width of 108 feet.

North Western Avenue at Madison Street; view looking south. This street to be widened 17 feet on each side and when widened will be a uniform width of 100 feet. This improvement when completed will be 15½ miles long.

South Western Avenue at Grenshaw Street, view looking south. This street to be widened 17 feet on each side and when widened will be a uniform width of 100 feet. This improvement when completed will be 15½ miles long.

Ashland Avenue; view looking south towards Milwaukee Avenue. This street to be widened to a width of 100 feet, 17 feet to be taken off each side of the street for a distance of 17 miles.

Ashland Avenue; view looking north at Belmont and Lincoln Avenues. This street to be widened to a width of 100 feet, 17 feet to be taken off each side of the street for a distance of 17 miles.

Ogden Avenue; view looking northeast at Randolph Street. Street to be opened to a width of 108 feet.

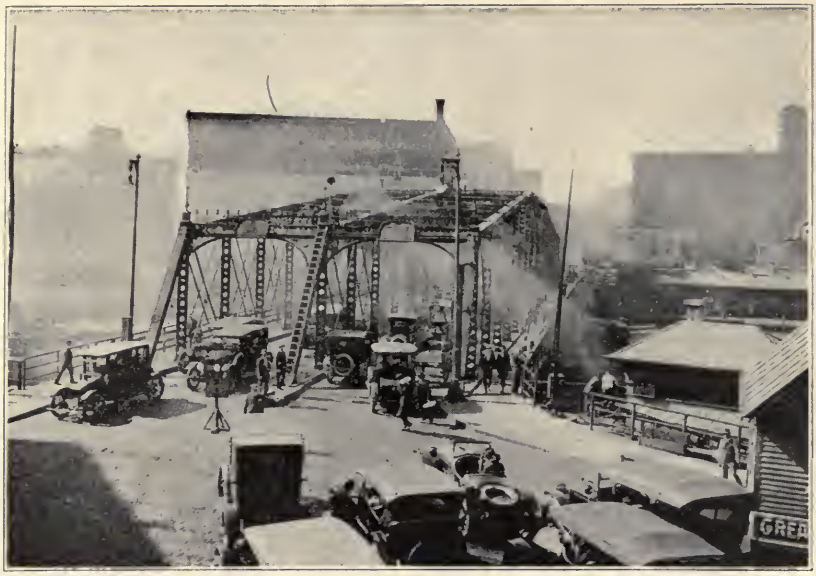
Ogden Avenue; view looking southwest at Clark and Center Streets. Street to be opened to a width of 108 feet; distance of improvement 2½ miles.

South Robey Street at Park Avenue; view looking south. Street to be widened to a width of 86 feet for a distance of 17 miles.

South Robey Street; view looking south at 39th Street. Street when opened and widened will be a width of 86 feet. A subway or viaduct will be constructed from 39th to 47th Street.

West 12th Street at Ashland Avenue; view looking east; before widening—66 feet in width.

West 12th Street at Ashland Avenue; view looking east; after widening—108 feet in width.

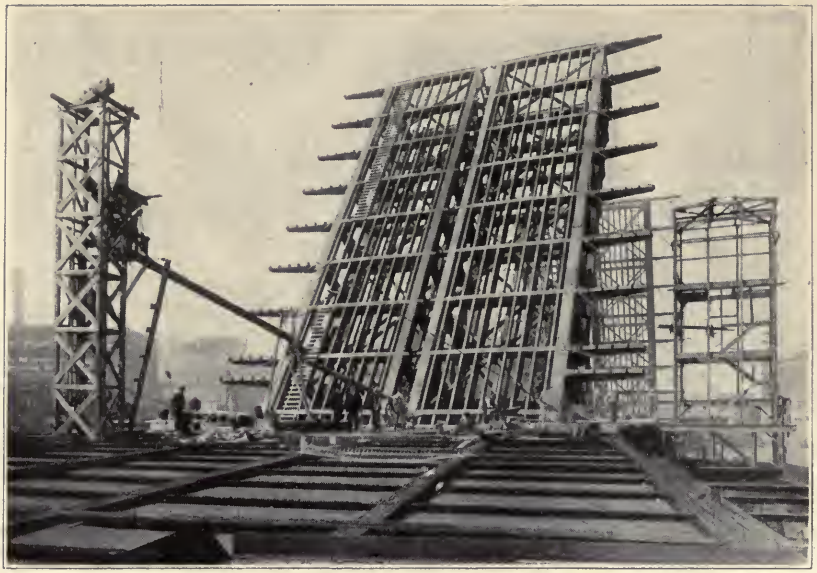


Old Rush Street Bridge. All that remains of it now is a memory.

New Michigan Avenue Bridge. 60,000 automobiles cross this bridge every 24 hours; capacity 150,000.

Michigan Avenue Bridge; view looking north across the bridge.

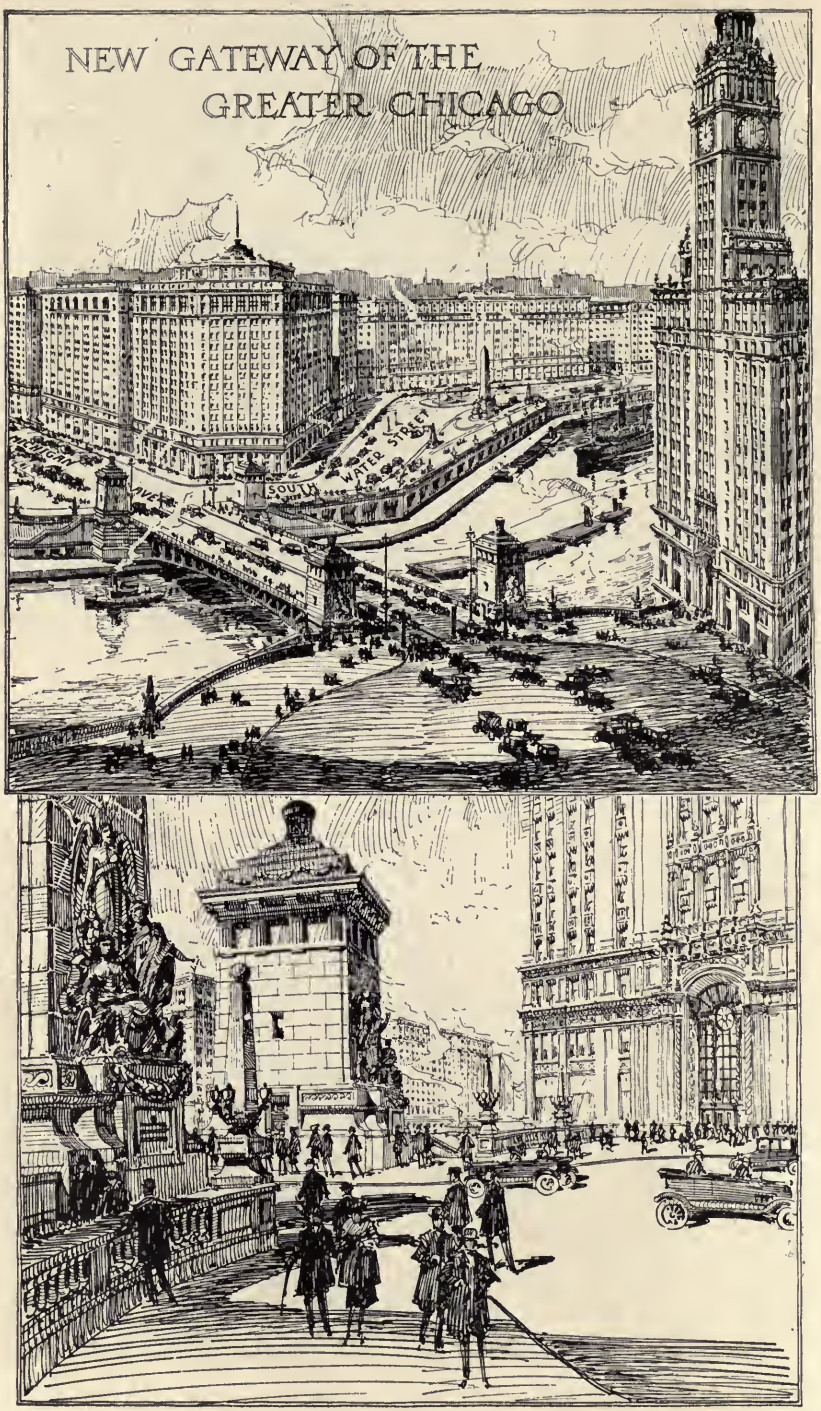
Michigan Avenue, view looking north from Randolph Street; width of street from Randolph Street to the River, 127½ feet, and from the River to Chicago Avenue, 141 feet.



Largest double deck bascule bridge in the world; to construct it required 3,500 tons of steel; 3,200 tons of counterweight; 500 tons of machinery and four 100 H. P. motors to operate this bridge.

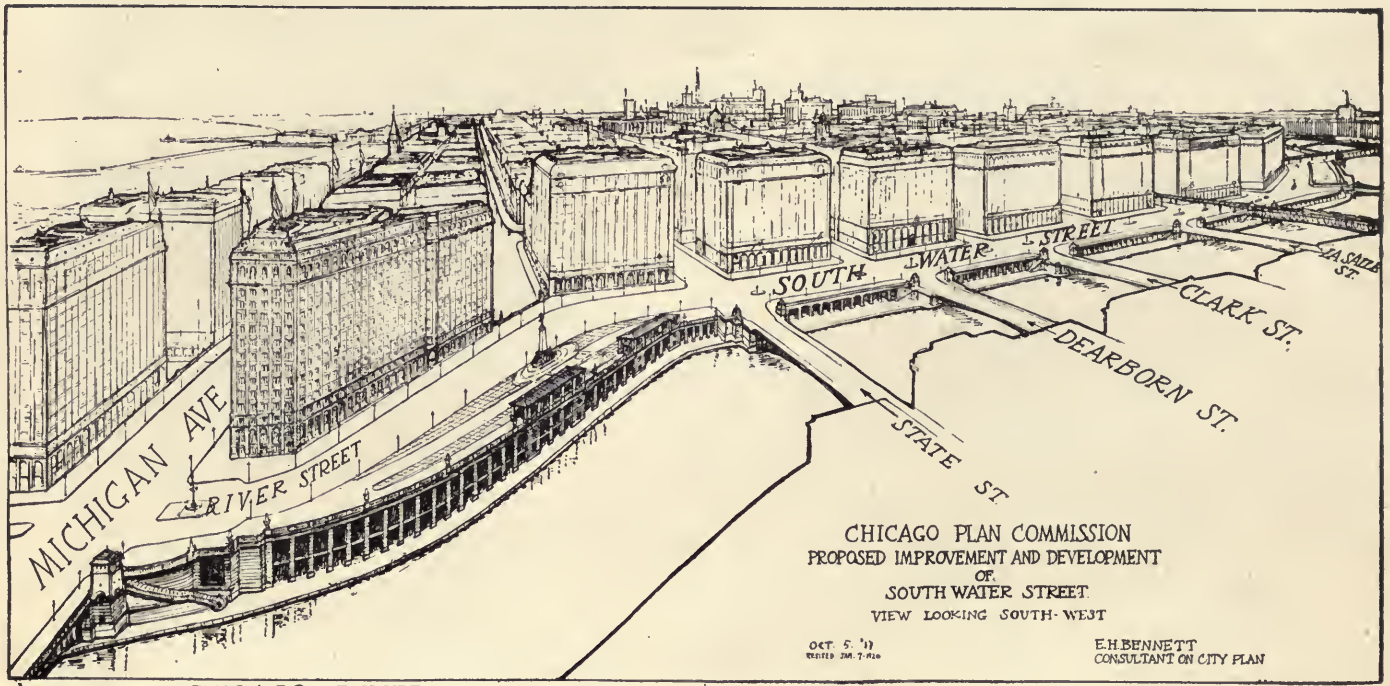
Michigan Avenue Bridge; east lower level roadway, looking north; which is used for heavy traffic.

View of Michigan Avenue, south approach superstructure; South Water Street, view looking west from Beaubien Court.


NEW GATEWAY OF THE
GREATER CHICAGO
WATER STREET
SOUTH

William Hale Thompson, Mayor, cutting the ribbon barrier; M. J. Faherty, President of the Board of Local Improvements; Eugene Pike, City Comptroller; Charles Wacker, Chairman Chicago Plan Commission.

A large demonstration by the people of the City of Chicago, at the dedication of the Boulevard Link, May 14th, 1920.



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BOARD OF LOCAL IMPROV